



15. AWARENESS

Conservation awareness is instrumental to conducting natural resources management. USARAK's approach to awareness stresses education. It provides military personnel and the public with insights into Fort Wainwright's natural environment and conservation challenges. The more people know about the installation's unique natural resources, the more responsibly they will act toward them.

Education also promotes awareness of critical environmental projects and the rationale behind them. Activities such as fish stocking, erosion control, wildfire suppression, etc. can be accomplished with little conservation awareness effort since soldiers, recreationists, and the general public naturally support these easily understood efforts. However, issues such as trespass structures, restrictions on troop operations, airboat operation, nongame manage-

ment, bear baiting, prescribed burning, etc. require effective conservation communication to obtain positive support and, perhaps more importantly, to avoid adverse reactions. A conservation awareness program must be directed at both installation and external interests if it is to be effective.

15-1 Objectives

Stewardship

- ▶ Involve the surrounding community in Fort Wainwright's natural resources program
- ▶ Ensure that Fort Wainwright's natural resources program is coordinated with other agencies and conservation organizations with similar interests

- ▶ Provide an understanding of the Fort Wainwright natural resources program through communication to installation and surrounding communities
- ▶ Increase understanding of natural resource conservation to youth groups
- ▶ Create at least four natural resources television events per year, with topics chosen by Natural Resources Branch and PAO

Quality of Life

- ▶ Use the media to educate the Fort Wainwright community regarding uses of natural resources for quality of life enhancement
- ▶ Provide hunters, trappers, and anglers with information needed to enjoy their sports within regulations
- ▶ Provide hunters, trappers, and anglers with information needed to understand their role in natural resources conservation

Integration

- ▶ Use the natural resources program to support and enhance other elements within the USARAK Environmental Program
- ▶ Provide decisionmakers with information needed to make judgements that affect the Fort Wainwright natural resources program

15-2 Community Education

15-2a Natural and Cultural Resources Education and Awareness

Project Description. Conduct natural and cultural resources education and awareness programs in the Fort Wainwright and local communities.

Project Justification. Natural resources education and awareness programs are necessary for the effective management of natural resources through the Sikes Act, AR 200-3, and numerous other laws and regulations.

Project Prescription. USARAK's weekly newspaper, the *Alaska Post*, is the most efficient way for Natural Resources Branch personnel to access the

Fort Wainwright community. The *Alaska Post* is used by Fort Richardson and Fort Greely as well as Fort Wainwright. This newspaper will be used to explain programs and gain support for their implementation. Articles target a wide range of readers, but may be designed to appeal to specific categories of readers.

Alaska Post staff writers generally interview natural resources personnel while covering natural resources topics. These articles will feature topics relating to major natural resources projects and other aspects of management that have public appeal. Recent articles have included bear safety, deterring cliff swallow nesting, and hunting and fishing. Recurring items of interest will be recycled about every third year to keep the transient population of Fort Wainwright informed of the most important and sensitive natural resources management challenges facing the post.

Other newspapers occasionally want information about Fort Wainwright's natural resources programs. News releases and interviews with outside media are coordinated with USARAK PAO. The *Fairbanks Daily News Miner* uses stories related to the installation's natural resources. Hunting and fishing are favorite topics, with an annual hunting edition that includes a section on military lands. Controversial issues, such as airboats and trespass structures, also attract off-post newspaper coverage.

Fort Wainwright has a television channel (Channel 19) dedicated to the on-post community. This media outlet will be used to post notices relating to the natural resources program. A common use of Channel 19 is reminders that new hunting, fishing, and trapping permits are needed or that annual harvest reports should be returned at the end of the year.

Fort Wainwright's natural resources program is seldom the subject of outside television coverage. Channel 11 is the local television channel, and its primary interest is "big story" events such as the BASH program following the aircraft crash at Elmendorf Air Force Base in late 1995.

In 1998-2002, the Fort Wainwright natural resources program, with assistance from PAO, will become more proactive regarding the use of television. Implementation of ITAM, floristic inventories, continuation of the BASH program, prescribed burn-

ing, etc. are very positive messages for the surrounding community. It is important to publicize “good news” items rather than only responding to controversy. The objective is to coordinate at least four television events per year, with topics chosen by the Natural Resources Branch and PAO.

USARAK and ADF&G have teamed up to create information leaflets on interior Alaska wildlife. Examples include a 2-page leaflet, *Winter Birds of Interior Alaska*, and a 4-page leaflet, *Owls of Central and Northern Alaska*. These help the military and civilian populations understand, enjoy, and conserve Alaska wildlife resources. Such efforts will be continued during 1998-2002 as needed.

USARAK submitted a Legacy Project for development and production of posters depicting the post’s terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. The posters were to be used for natural resources briefings, special events, and made available to incorporate into local school curriculums. A new funding source must be located to complete this project.

15-2a(1) Green Star Program

Description. Support Fort Wainwright Green Star efforts. The Green Star Program is an excellent means to help implement conservation awareness programs on Fort Wainwright and in the surrounding community. This program will help with many natural resources management and enforcement projects.

Methods. Produce materials to educate the post community regarding natural resources and their management. Attend the Earth Day celebration, school programs, and other community functions coordinated through the Fort Wainwright Green Star program.

15-2a(2) Hunting, Fishing, and Trapping Awareness

Description. Provide an awareness of recreational opportunities and responsibilities to hunters, trappers, and anglers who use Fort Wainwright. Many nonresident military (those who have lived in Alaska for less than a year) hunters, anglers, and trappers need education on hunting bears and moose, caring for meat, 4-wheel drive operation, outdoor survival, ethics, etc. Some topics are common to the nation as a whole, but many are specific to harsh condi-

tions and opportunities of interior Alaska. Effective protection of natural resources and sustained use of hunting, trapping, and fishing require that users understand laws and regulations regarding their sports.

Bear baiting is somewhat unique to Alaska, and many soldiers and their families do not have experience with this style of hunting. Classes are important to improve the black bear hunting experience, protect black bears from overharvest, and reduce noncompliance with regulations. These classes are required by the ADF&G for all first time bear baiters using Wildlife Management Unit 20-B, which includes YTA.

Methods. If fisheries personnel are available, a fisheries biologist for ADF&G will continue to teach soldiers about fishing opportunities during the annual spring training week on Fort Wainwright. This class includes fishing ethics, places to fish, public-private lands restrictions, etc.

USARAK will develop an information sheet on fishing opportunities and requirements on military lands in Alaska. This will be coordinated with the three large Army installations in Alaska, including Fort Wainwright.

USARAK, ADF&G, and other agencies have brochures and other materials that are beneficial to soldiers who hunt, fish, trap, or participate in other forms of outdoor recreation on Fort Wainwright and other areas of Alaska. During 1998-2002, USARAK will compile and publish these materials as a booklet. This will be coordinated with other Army installations to provide similar information to all USARAK soldiers. Signatory partners on this IN-RMP will assist with the booklet.

There are bulletin boards at the Sports Store and PMO to inform hunters, anglers, and trappers of requirements and opportunities for their sports. Maintenance of these bulletin boards will be continued during 1998-2002.

USARAK will work with ADF&G to develop a Military Hunter Services Program patterned after the statewide civilian program operated by ADF&G. An introductory program will explain opportunities and requirements to hunt, fish, or trap in Alaska, with emphasis on military personnel and military

lands. The first of these was held in August 1998. Lessons learned from this program will be applied to future classes.

USARAK will develop handouts, maps, and common game violation information sheets to support this class, using the same format as the Soldier Guide. Additional species-specific (bear, moose, etc.) programs will be developed and presented at appropriate times annually. USARAK will help develop this program, and ADF&G will administer it. Some reimbursement on the part of attendees may be required. This program would be applicable to all Army installations in Alaska. There may be an opportunity to partner with the USAF on this project as well.

USARAK will provide a place (usually the brigade theater) for annual bear baiting classes, which are taught by the ADF&G. USARAK will post fliers on entrances to the building as well as on the post theater (to avoid confusion). USARAK will contact the Public Affairs Office to advertise on post television and to print advertisements. This project will begin about mid-February each year to coordinate dates and times with ADF&G and PAO, to reserve the theater, and to be prepared for the class in early April.

15-2a(3) Youth Education

Description. Provide conservation education opportunities to young individuals and youth groups in the Fort Wainwright area. Long-term changes in conservation attitudes and knowledge are important aspects to an effective conservation awareness and education program. Such long-term changes are more easily achieved by working with youth; particularly youth groups that are already involved in conservation.

Methods. Fort Wainwright personnel are committed to cultivating a conservation ethic in local youth. Natural Resources Branch personnel work with youth groups on conservation programs. On occasion, they also give talks to youth groups. Boy Scouts, in particular, need support with projects, merit badges, and conservation talks. Scouts have assisted with natural resources management on Fort Wainwright, such as an Eagle Scout project building boreal owl nesting boxes.

In 1998-2002, Fort Wainwright's natural resources personnel will continue to work with youth groups whenever possible, as a good investment in our future.

15-2a(4) Create Wildlife Display Area

Description. Develop an indoor wildlife display area at Fort Wainwright. A permanent, indoor wildlife display area offers year-round opportunities to present conservation awareness materials to a wide variety of military and civilian personnel. Wildlife museums at Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Air Force Base are exceptionally popular attractions.

Methods. USARAK would like to develop a wildlife museum at Fort Wainwright, similar to the popular museum at Fort Richardson. Funding to develop the museum is not identified, especially with the loss of the Legacy program. If funding opportunities develop, this project will be considered during 1998-2002.

15-2b Watchable Wildlife

Project Description. Conduct the Watchable Wildlife program on Fort Wainwright.

Project Justification. The Watchable Wildlife program will provide improved wildlife viewing opportunities for the Fort Wainwright community, Alaska residents, and visitors, as well as benefit public relations for U.S. Army Alaska. This is in accordance with the Sikes Act, AR 200-3, and national and state memoranda of agreements between the Army or Department of Defense and other agencies and organizations for Watchable Wildlife programs.

Project Prescription. Projects will include, but not be limited to, wildlife viewing, nature trails, interpretive signs, brochures, facilities, audio visual productions, public presentations, and cooperative publications with local, state, and federal agencies.

15-2b(1) Chena River Viewing Platforms

Description. Construct viewing platforms along the Chena River in the Main Post area for Watchable Wildlife.

Justification. Viewing platforms offer excellent opportunities for the public to better understand the value of natural resources. They also support quality of life programs.

Methods. A 1996 Legacy project was proposed to develop viewing platforms on the Chena River where salmon and resident freshwater fish are found, and at Sage Hill Pond where migratory birds and resident wildlife can be viewed. Both viewing platforms have been constructed. Interpretative signs are to be completed and added in 1999. Signage for the platform near the hospital will emphasize fish species in the Chena River and explain relationships between vegetation and wildlife as part of the river's ecology. Signage for the platform near the golf course will show the Chena River, tracks of mammals that live on post, and birds found in the area. Funding will be sought from other sources for Watchable Wildlife projects. Additional project planning will occur when funding is available.

15-2b(2) Nature Trail Development

Description. Develop nature trails to access wildlife viewing opportunities.

Justification. Nature trails offer excellent opportunities for the public to better understand the value

of natural resources. They also support quality of life programs.

Methods. Natural resources personnel will work with outdoor recreation personnel to expand the Glass Park Nature Trail to provide access to the new viewing platforms along the Chena River. The project will involve brush clearing through alders and willows to create a trail. It might be possible to use AFS to complete this project as a training opportunity.

There is a need for nature trails near the two Fort Wainwright schools. Natural resources personnel will develop these trails in conjunction with school administrators, perhaps using students to help complete the project. The trails could contain a variety of interpretative materials, ranging from trail signs to brochures, perhaps developed as student projects.

A canoe nature trail will be developed along the Chena River between the golf course and the boat launching area or Glass Park. This trail will have numbered posts along the river corresponding to a trail guide for canoeists. Additional details will be developed along with potential funding sources.

